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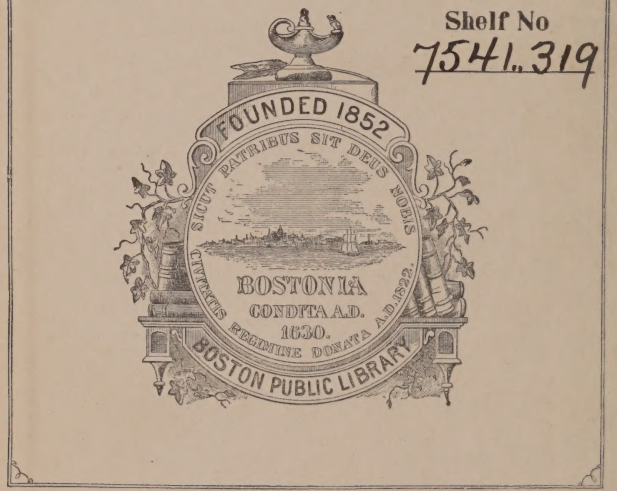

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Redemption; The Gospel Message, and its Warrant:

A

SERMON

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MAY 4, 1853.

BY GEORGE E. ELLIS,

PASTOR OF THE HARVARD CHURCH, CHARLESTOWN.

With the Charge, Right-Hand of Fellowship, and Address to the Society.

CITY OF BOSTON

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TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

(Romberg.)

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

Rev. O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

READING OF THE SCRIPTURES

Rev. J. I. T. COOLIDGE.

HYMN OF INSTALLATION.

(Ravenscroft, ob. 1630.)

ETERNAL LORD! To Thee the Church
Where now we praise and pray,
Though old to our historic search,
Is but of yesterday.

Of yesterday is all our race
To thine all-present sight;
Before thy Truth both Time and Place
Dissolve in higher light.

Yet here, O heavenly Father, grant
Thy special Presence down!
Our Fathers' God, the children's want
With chosen bounties crown.

O deign to write thy love and fear
Upon these humble walls!
And speak when sinful man shall hear,
And listen when he calls.

Train up this flock, a Church indeed,
Unspotted, unenticed,
On thy dear Word of Life to feed,
And follow after Christ.

With light and strength, O Fount Divine!
Fill high thy servant's heart,
Who seeks anew the anointing sign,—
The Grace Thou shalt impart.

N. L. F.

SERMON.

Rev. GEORGE E. ELLIS.

PRAYER OF INSTALLATION.

Rev. N. L. FROTHINGHAM.

PSALM.

(Ellenwood. H. K. O.)

"THE LORD gave the word;"—'twas the Word of his Truth,
And the Word of Salvation for all men to be.
Then forth went its preachers, the aged, the youth,
And "great was the company."

"THE LORD gave the word;"—it was not as of old
When the Ark of his Strength to the Temple was brought,
With the clanging of steel, and the gleaming of gold,
And spoils of a battle fought.

But the Gospel of Faith in the Spirit of Love
Is the true "King of Glory" the Church has enshrined;
And "the chariots of God" are the "thousands" that move
As "angels" to bless mankind.

O Lord, give this Word its triumphant success!
Be its mercy and peace on thy worshippers here!
And clothe all thy saints with its righteousness,
With its earnest joy and fear.

N. L. F.

CHARGE.

Rev. E. S. GANNETT.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

Rev. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY.

Rev. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

ANTHEM.

CONCLUDING PRAYER.

Rev. ALEXANDER YOUNG.

BENEDICTION.

By the PASTOR.

PRESS OF MUNROE AND FRANCIS.

SERMON.

1 Tim. i. 15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

It is but a measured and a softened assertion to make concerning a truth which offers salvation to a world of intelligent though sinful creatures. To say that this truth is "worthy of all acceptation" is to express the divine mercy which it reveals, and the dangerous state of man which it recognizes, in the mildest terms of language. The most glowing rhetoric of human speech, with all its strongest and boldest phrases, might have been employed to announce that truth. But perhaps it is most impressively stated in the calm sentence of our text. That sentence is a specimen of many in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, in which a positive and comprehensive truth is set forth in terms, each of which may open questions as to its precise signification; while that central truth, which all the terms help to express, leaves the impression of a literal and a distinct statement that can have but one meaning,

obvious at once to the mind, and instantly apprehended as it is spoken.

The positive assertion in our text is, that the mission of Jesus Christ was for the redemption of man; that his Gospel is the medium of salvation to sinners. This assertion, however we may debate it, can excite and can leave but one impression as to its meaning in the human mind. Yet each term and phrase used in the sentence may be made matter of question, and even of endless controversy. "This is a faithful saying:" — It has ceased to be *a saying*, as it then was, a truth spoken in the ears of men through lips that could enforce it by personal testimony; and it has become a matter of writing, — of a record, — of an inspired and a holy record. Questions at once arise about that record, about its author, its history, its inspiration, its authority. "Jesus Christ came into the world:" — Who was Jesus Christ? Whence did he come? When did he come? How did he come into the world? These are questions which are opened to the restless inquiries of the human mind. "To save sinners:" — Who are sinners? What constitutes them sinners? How did they become sinners? From what are sinners saved? How are they saved? How do they cease to be sinners, or cease to be treated as sinners? What volumes of controversy or debate are burdened with these questions!

The saying that Christ Jesus came into the world and for that purpose, the apostle says, "is worthy of all acceptation." What is meant by its acceptation? Is the heart

or the mind the medium of accepting that truth? Is assent to it, and appreciation of it, and an experimental consciousness of it, wrought out in the calm tranquillity or in the excited alarm of our inner being? And is it wrought by the action of our own natural powers, or only through the peculiar mediation of God's Spirit?

These are questions which are so fertile of debate as to exhaust the capabilities of language in their discussion; and they may all be raised, when we dissect the sentence of our text into the terms which are used to express its central assertion. But, when criticism and discussion are wearied with their often profitless task, it will be impossible essentially to affect either the signification or the solemnity of the plain truth, which all the words and phrases of the text combine to set forth. The Gospel-message writes itself on the hearts of the simple and the believing, while controversy deals with the sound and the grammar and the dialect of its speech. That message is, — that Jesus Christ is the medium of redemption to those who need redemption. If that truth is not in the Gospel, then the Gospel is empty of all truth. If that truth is not the leading, the comprehensive lesson of the Gospel, then language has lost its power to convey intelligible ideas to our minds. That truth is indeed the message of the Gospel. That truth *is* the Gospel.

The grave but simple services connected with the successive recognitions of the pastoral office over the churches of

our Lord Jesus Christ, have not lost their ancient solemnity or interest for us. Few established formalities can claim to have so much that is appropriate in them. We respect the proprieties of the occasion, and frame our thoughts in harmony with the spirit which should hallow it, when we seek a theme that brings us nearest to the central truth in the Gospel. The world is now in possession of certain large, lofty views, that have been well considered, that are firmly rooted in human convictions, — the medium of a benignant and a hallowing influence, favorable to the virtuous ends of life, the source and the warrant of all that can quicken and comfort and sanctify the heart of man. Discussion and controversy have studied these themes in every conceivable blending of light and shade, and have turned them over and over with a wearying repetition. These themes must always be kept open for the debate of the world; but they should at some time be decided for individuals. The mental training and the just demands of moral freedom of the successive generations of our race require, that all truth, and all that claims to be truth, should yield itself to the renewed scrutiny, the most deliberate and inquisitive investigations, of men. But unless we, in the mature years of our own short life, would be ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, we must take some things in earth and heaven, some things in history, in fact, and in mortal experience, as established to our faith. In the years of our maturity, amid the cares and risks of life, the earnestness of our religious interest is needed,

not in the criticism of religion, but in the spiritual and the practical work which it gives us to do. Let us, then, take some truth as established in times before our own, and as verified in our own experience. Let us proceed upon an admitted belief in God, — upon a belief also in Christ, — a belief fortified by the faith of those who have gone before us in the ways of mortal discipline; who have revealed to us their hearts, and told us of their sins, their struggles, their visions, and their refuge. The temple is already builded for us: we have not to rear it. Its altar has already been consecrated: the precious offerings, the tears and vows and prayers of vanished worshippers, have made it holy. The baptismal font has beheld the whitening locks of many generations of those whose infant-brows were sprinkled from its pure waters. The sacramental vessels have been clasped by those who have passed on to the visible presence of Him with whom they here communed. We are the children of a Christian parentage; the inheritors of truth that shall outlive our fleeting years. We have not to settle the faith of the world, but to warm and to obey our own. We at least may testify to the value to us of Christian faith; we may realize anew what is the painful fact concerning our condition, which makes it of vital necessity to us; and we may offer again upon this ancient altar our gratitude to God for his unspeakable gift.

Jesus Christ is the medium of redemption and salvation to sinners. This is the message of his Gospel. It is worthy of all acceptation. There is not a region of the earth but

what that message would bless; not a human heart that it might not quicken and cheer. In that truth lies the intelligible, the credible, and the effective power of the Gospel. Philosophy and controversy cannot hide it from the human heart. It will not grow antiquated as centuries roll on. It was, and is, and will be truth, yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

I have said that the intelligible, the credible, and the effective power of the Gospel lies in the truth, that Jesus Christ is the medium of redemption to sinners. This statement indicates to us the basis on which our faith in the Gospel must rest, and the reason why we should value it. We need it. Our need of it is our greatest necessity, and the Gospel is able to answer that necessity. No other view which we can take of the Gospel will give it a firm hold upon our convictions, or a treasured place in our hearts, or a practical power over our lives. Religion, as a theme for the intellect, from which brilliant minds and eloquent tongues may draw lessons to meet the various experiences of life, will sooner or later exhaust its power to interest or charm us. As a matter of critical speculation, it will present many perplexities, and open many bewildering processes of thought. To whatever results profound investigations may lead, they will seldom meet the necessities of a troubled heart, or serve like the armor of God for the great conflicts of life. According as we fix our thoughts upon the redemptive view of the Gospel, shall we find it easy to believe it with an earnest confidence, to value it

with a devout gratitude, and to heed its message as a law for our lives.

We need to take a religious view of religion. We need *that*, above all things, as the condition of all religious faith and practice. The remark may sound to some persons like a common-place truism, or a mere play upon words. But it is an assertion of solemn and momentous meaning. We need to take a religious view of religion; and the most religious truth in all religion — that which carries with it its authority and power to the heart of man — is the truth that the Gospel is the medium of salvation to us sinners. It certainly was not to amuse us, or to instruct us, or to develop our powers and faculties, that God commissioned his beloved Son to bring to us his Gospel. We should find it impossible to authenticate the divine, the heavenly source of our religion on either of those views of its chief design. The means which already exist on the earth are sufficient to accomplish those ends. Religion does present to us other views and aspects, even of its own great themes, beside those which are strictly religious, devotional, spiritual, regenerating. It presents an historical, a critical, a philosophical, a controversial view, each of which has its claims to notice, and its method of treatment; but still the efficacy of religion lies wholly in the religious view of it.

There are legitimate themes of discussion opened for philosophy and criticism in the whole substance of religion; and these themes are of eminent interest and of a most intense importance, as they involve the integrity of historical

documents, or the great harmonies of all truth. It is alike unwise and useless to resist the application of any test which the most frank or the most unsparing severity of investigation may apply to each and every element that enters into the Christian religion. But a candid mind will admit, that the chief purpose which the Gospel itself claims to serve, and offers as its warrant for our faith, should be apprehended by the faculty to which it is addressed. The strictly religious element of the Gospel must, at one or another stage in all discussions, engage our spiritual consciousness in its theme of redemption.

We enter into no definitions of sin, of its origin, extent, or effects in this world and upon ourselves. We accept as a reality the sad fact which has been the burden of human hearts for all ages, — that man needs redemption and renewal from above, the mercy of God, the help of God to show him the way backwards or forwards, it matters not which, to reconciliation with God. Every record and memorial, whether of profane or of sacred history, which has survived the wreck of time, every grey altar-stone and crumbling temple, every utterance of the human heart, testifies to that fact. Poor, grim idolatries, the wretched superstitions, and the barbarous rites of heathenism, as well as the milder and more intelligent devotions of enlightened regions of the earth, all bear witness that the spirit of man groans for deliverance. Nor need we take any narrow, dogmatic view of that fact. We may give the largest definition to that necessity of man which throws him upon

the mercy of God. It covers all the infirmity and imperfection and guilt and risk and conflict realized and encountered through the whole compass of human life. Even our ignorance in matters that concern our duty and our highest good; even our inability to live in conformity with our own sense of our obligations; even the mixture of selfish or inordinate feelings with every natural affection,— all seem to be connected with that one great fact of human sin, under the burden of which we ask relief from God, as from him alone it can come. There may be a philosophy in this problem of sin deeper than the mind of man can fathom; but the experience of the power and the evil of sin is painfully intelligible to us all. If we follow the course of human life under any circumstances, and with the mildest spirit of charity in all allowances and kind constructions, we shall meet with this fact of sin. If we penetrate to the secret depths of a heart, even the most guileless and confiding and pure and self-forgetting, according to such issues of it as appear in the conduct, we are made to realize that even *there* is conflict, — the sigh, the longing for a perfect peace with God. And if we glance over the common scenes of life, or gather up the whole experience of existence, or classify the influences at work in society, amid the evidences of an agency of good all fruitful and beneficent around us, we shall find that the earth is no paradise; that love is not the supreme power here; and that sin clouds every scene, and darkens every breast, till the Saviour of men reveals his redeeming office.

It is to meet this fact of human experience that we need the help of religion. The religious element in religion is that element in it which directly ministers to this deepest and universal want of man. We can scarce conceive that God should communicate in any miraculous way with man for any other purpose than for this. If, to meet the last demand which a hesitating or troubled mind might make for a better assurance of faith, we were forced to speak the last and best reason which we could offer for a divine interposition in behalf of man, that beautiful Gospel word *grace* would offer the key-note for a strain that would touch the heart. There is a necessity of man which the boundless universe, with all its wealth and glory and wisdom, fails to supply. To meet that necessity, God may reveal the heights and the depths of his own benignant mercy. For no other want do we need that he do more for us than he has done. The bountiful fertility of the world around us, the means of existence, the objects and scenes and relations which encompass us, leave us no cause to ask as though we needed any thing more that the seasons and the earth can impart. The fruitful agencies of nature will supply our bodily wants. The common relations of life, those most close and tender, or those most extensive and free, will meet the common range of our affections. The instinctive faculties of our minds, with all that prompts their inquisitive exercises and helps their processes of wisdom, are abundant in themselves to guide us to all needful knowledge for the earth. Life is richly ministered to for

its short duration. Every want, save the highest want, is supplied by the resources of nature. Sunlight and shower mature the fruits on which we subsist. The forests and the mines contribute to our comfort and skill; and the unerring lights of heaven will indicate the way of travel by land or sea, wherever we may roam over the globe. We could not propose a reason why God should do more for us, we could not advance a want which he had left unsupplied, we should have no experience or faculty through which we could receive yet another blessing from him, were it not for that craving of the soul within us which seeks reconciliation in heart and life with God. It is that religious view of the great object of the Gospel of Christ which alone can make it credible, intelligible, or effective to us. Let any other view of it engage our chief interest, and draw us to its study for curiosity, criticism, or speculation, and it becomes a perplexity. Let any other want of our own than that which is religious and spiritual seek for a supply in the Gospel, and it will seek in vain.

How thoroughly has the truth been attested to us, that, if any other view of the Gospel is permitted to obscure that which regards it as meeting the most pressing necessity of man, as a frail, erring, and exposed creature, it loses its simplicity to the mind, its warm welcome from the heart, and its power over the life! The critical study of the Gospel-records, with philosophical speculations upon questions which no wisdom of man can ever answer, have recently prevailed in many quarters over that devotional interest in

it which once gave it so fond a place in the hearts alike of the profoundest thinkers and scholars, and of the humblest worshippers at its altars. And what have been the consequences? From the library of the critical student have come essays which array philosophy and history against faith; an issue which could not be fairly tried, even supposing it to be in itself fair, until we had a perfect philosophy, and could carry into the obscurities of antiquity a light of our own, which should reveal just what all are ignorant of, and throw its shadows upon what is best known and has been long assured to men. Some who have received from this Gospel in early life, from fond lips, and from the inspiration of a love and wisdom learned from the sacred page, all that the Gospel can do for the heart and life and mind, have used the skill, and even the exalted offices of instruction, which they have received from Christ, to turn him into a fable for faith, or the luckiest product of nature and of time. Such as these, having risen to a fair height of vision by the ladder let down from heaven to earth for the messengers of God, stand upon the summit which they have attained, and call to the young and the unbelieving to mount and enjoy the prospect. But how can they, except some one would aid them? How can they mount as their teacher has mounted, while he removes the ladder of his own ascent, and casts its broken fragments at their bewildered heads?

Consequences painful and instructive enough there are all around us to prove, that, if any other view of religion

stands before this of its merciful help to man, as a frail, exposed, and sinful creature, it will lose its hold upon the heart, and its power over the conduct. If we make the office of religion to be merely entertaining or instructive, or even to serve chiefly as a solace under the burdens of life, its temples will fail of their worshippers, its holy influences will lose their power, the young of a new generation will grow up alienated from it, and a languor and indifference, hard to reach for good, will settle over a community. We have realized enough of those consequences to make us sad, if not fearful, for the future. Apart from the genius or the shining powers which the ministers of religion may or may not possess, the impulse which draws worshippers to its temples must be the sense that they need the peace of God in their hearts. True, we may so refine and exalt religion as to connect with its themes all the charm and glow of interest which attach to other subjects. But it is to be remembered, that religion may be surpassed by science, music, literature, or social attractions, in the power of imparting transient delight; but that its redeeming and sanctifying influence is all its own.

We need the help of religion to meet three of our chief and most pressing wants, — to teach us our duty, to keep us conformed to it, and to supply to us a motive; we need it as a light, as a law, and as a hope; we need it as knowledge, as a principle, and as faith. But all these wants are but different manifestations of that one great necessity which is met by the Gospel as a redeeming, saving blessing

from God through Christ. According as we exalt that one view of the Gospel, and distinguish it from all others, shall we understand the Gospel, and apply it to our lives. How solemn and benignant is the sublime truth which it proclaims, — "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself"! — a truth which makes the feeblest preacher of it a mighty instrument of its power, if he believe it in his own heart, and utter it as that heart prompts. That august truth, laden with its message of mercy, which streams from age to age, and excludes no child of God from its gentle appeals, is enough to authenticate our religion to us. That one truth distinguishes the Gospel from all the religions and philosophies of the earth through all time. Any single sentence which expresses in substance that truth, or either of the conditions which it involves, could never be confounded with a sentence from any other book than the New Testament: it would be out of place on any page of any volume in the largest library of the world, except the sentence were quoted from the Sacred Scriptures. Take, for instance, these sentences from a Christian Epistle, — "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Who does not feel, as he reads such sentences, that no one could have written

or spoken them who was not dealing with truth of a most penetrating character? We cannot imagine one of the old philosophers, even the most spiritual of them, as requiring such strong and quickening terms to express any thing that he had to teach. Those words reach to a depth which philosophy never sounded; but they are read without surprise in the records of our faith, because we know that the heights and depths of the human heart lie all revealed in the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The redemptive mission of Christ is the ground of a Gospel-faith, the guide to all such practice and conduct as the Gospel requires. That redeeming work applies to all that is wicked or evil or of harmful tendency in this world: it is everywhere a healing, renewing influence. The work is begun at the very roots of the human heart, in those recesses of it to which the All-seeing Eye penetrates,—turning the motive-power of that heart, its direction, its purpose, its ruling inclination, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to allegiance to God. Through its renewing work in the human heart, it would make conduct and character, and the whole course of life, conformed to the divine will. Then the same redemptive influence applies to all the relations which human beings sustain to each other: it would purify and elevate and consecrate them all; divesting them all of evil, making them all fruitful of good, hallowing all parental and filial ties, and those which bind the sexes together, and those ties even which connect us with the departed of our households. Then the same

redemptive work of Christ extends over the widening circles of all human intercourse, quickening all tender sympathies, inspiring all charities, seeking out the wretched, educating the ignorant, reforming the vicious, and rescuing the abandoned; addressing to each child of man the Saviour's words, which will apply to the best as well as to the worst of our race, — "Friend, come up higher." It was for all these sacred works that Jesus Christ came into the world. His Gospel is therefore the salt of life, the new leaven, the healthful water, the bread from heaven, the doctrine of godliness. There is something in that divine ministry of mercy, that lowly life of contumely and suffering and sacrifice, which has power to move the sympathies of the world. The cross of Christ is a sacred phrase, of whose meaning we have but a fragment when we restrict it to the last scene of his life. Does it not spread its patience and its sorrow, its attraction and its efficacy, over every hour of his earthly ministry? Does it not cover the whole meaning and object and agency of that Gospel which has come into the world to be the wisdom and power of God unto salvation? We know the work which that Gospel has to do, — a work which no merely human agency ever can perform. The healing art which ministers to bodily disease has no more manifest office of necessity, than has he who so graciously took to himself the title of the Physician of Souls.

We can understand, we can believe, we can apply the Gospel, when this view of it, as the medium of redemption

and salvation for man, is put above and before all other views of it.

We can *understand* it, because it addresses itself to the deepest and the most real necessity of our hearts. It reveals to us the truth concerning ourselves. To how many millions of our race has the Gospel spoken the very word to which their hearts have answered! "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" Yes. He who can thus read the heart, and expose its infirmity, and be the physician that shall restore to it the image of God, must be the Christ of God; and the message which he speaks will be intelligible to us. Only through the efficiency of that simple truth can we account for the fact, that the Gospel has gathered its disciples, from the very first, from every scene of human life, and from every class and condition of men. The loftiest in intellect, genius, and position have received from it the same healing as the very lowliest, because their disease was the same. The Gospel is not intelligible under any other view of it. Attribute to it any other chief design than that of redemption, and the key to all its mysteries is lost. Its great truth is its whole interpretation.

Again, we can *believe* the Gospel when our faith is claimed for it, because its message is redemption. And only because that is its message are we asked to believe it. Not merely as a chronicle of a few facts in ancient history, not merely as a philosophical exposition of human life, are we to regard the New Testament as offered to test our

critical skill, or to serve as a new puzzle for our weary brains. The curious ingenuity of scepticism, as applied to history, has proved that no fact or narrative can be so authenticated that it may not be resolved into the mists of fable. Philosophy long ago satisfied at least one teacher of it, that there is no such thing as pain except in our imagination, while another sage teacher of it convinced himself that the whole visible world of matter is nothing but a phantom. Those who can believe nothing as religion can believe every thing and any thing as philosophy. But there is a philosophy of redemption which offers itself to the heart. It is easy to believe that. There is a delicate but a strong instinct within us, by which we cling to all the high objects of faith, though they are beset with difficulties and perplexities for our minds. We feel that all sorts of questions may be asked concerning them, that must be left unanswered; that all sorts of objections may be urged against them, while still a voice, which plainly has the ear of our spirit, whispers and pleads, "Hold to them, do not give them up." The one difficult effort, the strain upon our minds, after all, is the connecting of the acknowledged truth that is in the Gospel, first with the soul of man on the earth, and then with God in heaven; for the Gospel must unite those two divided objects, that it may be the medium of a divine influence for humanity. Long and instructive experience has proved what is the condition of success in that effort. By restraining, not the vigor, nor any healthful tendency, but only the curiosity, the conceit,

and the arrogance of the mind, and by indulging a filial, reverential trust in God, faith is made equal to its needful trial. It is hard to believe the Gospel as history or philosophy, unless its own interpretation of its errand commends it to our faith. Even some of those who saw and heard the miracles and the lessons which it records, were looking for something that it did not offer, and were hardened against its gentle appeals to their hearts; and so, as the candid record tells us, "they believed not." Its disciples were they who felt the need of its benedictions; and its power over their hearts, as a revelation of the mercy which they needed, won the assent of their minds.

And this view of the chief design of the Gospel directly assures its *practical power*. Can the world ever be made better from its own internal resources? Can man's heart ever be operated upon for good, except by a power outside of itself, — an influence which can purify because it is itself pure? No. All our hope for the world and for man must rest upon a conviction that some heavenly help is engaged on our side. It comes to us in the form of a divine law revealed to us through Christ, — a law of duty and of piety, compassing life all around with sacred lessons, warnings, and appeals; giving to each one of us a great work to do, with the heart for it, and the motive for it, and a guide in it. Christian activity has never yet filled its place among the evidences of the Gospel; but an argument of singular power to authenticate its divine origin might be sustained from the earnest, busy, and useful work in which it would

engage all of its disciples. No other religion ever known in this world has ever set itself to the practical work of redemption in all the reforming, renewing efforts and aims which that blessed Gospel work takes under its sacred office. A religion which meets the fact of sin, and builds upon it the work of holiness, is from God.

The Gospel, then, is the medium of redemption to man. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is the ground on which we value the Gospel, the assurance of our faith in it, the means of all its practical influence. A multitude of themes, opening from this, have all along been inviting remark by way of illustration or of evidence; but the conditions of time and of the occasion have forbidden even a word upon them, else we should have been led to expatiate upon the means which the Gospel requires and uses to make its message of redemption effective for man. But only one single truth, and that imperfectly stated, has engaged us, — the truth that the central message of the Gospel is the mission of Jesus Christ to redeem men from sin; a message which constitutes the very religion of our faith, giving to it its simplicity, its truth, and its power.

All the lessons from a Christian pulpit must cluster about that central truth. It is the heart of the Christian system. The life-current which animates all faith and zeal in all doctrine and duty must circulate through that heart of truth. We must enter the temple of our worship, and bow before the altar, as sinners and as suppliants. "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden," is the appeal which

should draw us to the Christian sanctuary, and make the lessons of Christ to be precious to our very souls. What peculiar power or purpose has the Christian pulpit, save to treat that one solemn and grateful theme in all its manifold relations to human life! If we could but truly know what is our real want, how gratefully should we seek its full supply in the glorious Gospel of the Son of God! If we could but learn to interpret aright all our bosom-conflicts, our poor worldliness and folly, our distracted lives, how humbly should we come to seek this peace of God! Religious zeal for all that feeds and exercises devotion grows cold just as the heart loses its sense of this great want, and that zeal warms and glows again as the heart knows its need of a Redeemer.

It is to meet and to rouse into an earnest desire this want of human hearts that this venerable Church of Christ adds this day another to its long line of pastors. May his sufficiency be of God! May he find here, not ease in labor, not a field for intellectual power, but an opportunity to win souls to Christ! May he minister to your wants, and help you to feel the greatest and the deepest of them! May his claim to your respect and love rest upon his fidelity as a minister of the New Covenant to you and to your children!

This is an ancient church. The fair city which has grown up around it, and which all who were born in it so dearly love, received the name it bears from the former scene of the labors of the first of its honored and revered teachers. Its history begins on the other side of the sea, and the early

pages of it are bedewed with all that can move the human heart with a sacred sympathy and a tender love. The stormy waves of the ocean, the perilous trials of its wilderness-infancy here, gave to it its baptism of water and of fire. Men and women whose characters would be honored by any standard of judgment, whose sacrifices proved something more than their sincerity, even their heroism of faith, their entire confidence in the leadings of God through a way which borrowed its light wholly from the end of it, — even such as these laid the beginnings here; for "it pleased God to sift even the wheat of three kingdoms, that he might send choice seed into the wilderness." The solemnities of this hour call back from vanished years their forms and their Christian experience. From their rude huts, planted upon the soil of this peninsula, the cheerful exiles gathered to their first temple; and there, within its clay walls and beneath its thatched roof, were those of whom "God was not ashamed to be called their God," for his blessing has followed their work. A grave and tranquil look of countenance, dignity of character and demeanor, thoughts that could not find pleasure in trifles, and a sacred purpose which had reference to a long posterity here and a precious hope hereafter, would, in any place or age, have marked that company in the First Church for honor, and have given promise that whatsoever they did should prosper. In their hearts was a faith which was indeed the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, — a faith in God, in his Son, and in his Spirit, which, whatever terms

it might use for its expression, was the root of the whole matter.

Cotton and Wilson, Winthrop, Dudley, Johnson, Coddington, Nowell, Gager, Aspinwall, Colburn, Rossiter and Vane, and others, with the honored and pious women of their exiled household, have left a precious memorial of their well-tried Christian virtues. What a sacred fragrance embalms their pure fame, and lingers around the scenes of their Christian pilgrimage! Kindred of theirs in uninterrupted descent are still among the living worshippers around this altar. Even of the first teacher of this church, some of you have received the blood that is in your veins. We renew here once more this day the grateful memorial upon their monuments.

Honored and reverend fathers and mothers of that close-knit fellowship in Christ, while your sacred shades come up in vision to our retrospective thought, let us feel that you are one with us in the sentiment and sympathy of this hour, which, more than any form of words or harmony of speculations, bind together the redeemed in Christ! May we not feel, that, in the purified vision of your own glorified spirits, you welcome to the scene of your former earthly labors a new brother of your fellowship! To the watch and ward of your heavenly guardianship we commit him; to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant; and to God the Judge of all!

CHARGE,

BY REV. EZRA S. GANNETT.

To you, my friend, the Charge which according to usage forms a part of these services, can be addressed only in the form of affectionate counsel. Nay, it is but the interpretation, in our poor words, of the deep and solemn purposes in your own breast to which you would find it difficult to give adequate expression. Ten years of ministerial labor have not left you ignorant of the responsibilities of your office; and practical acquaintance with its duties, while it has ripened your judgment, has not impaired your sensibility. We do not come, even on your invitation, to lay our commands on your conscience, as if an authority or a wisdom belonged to us superior to your own. What, indeed, is the authority which any human being is entitled to claim over his fellow-creature, in the dread presence of those obligations which give to this hour its peculiar meaning? This is not the time for clerical arrogance or professional fallacies. Voices before which we all bow in reverence address you now. God charges you, through the

providence which calls you to this field of labor. Christ charges you, through the Gospel in which you believe. The apostles of the Lord charge you, through their examples and their writings. The Church charges you, through its past history and its present wants. Life charges you, through its opportunities and its issues. The scene around us charges you, through the sympathies and hopes which compose its character. They charge you; not we. What their charge is, you know.

We offer you a few words of friendly counsel. As you stand at the entrance of your work, we would remind you of the conditions on which alone it can be successfully prosecuted. The first and chief of which, that indeed which includes all others, cannot be better described than in the language of the Apostle to his younger friend, "Give yourself wholly to these things." Behold here the means alike of success and of happiness in your ministry. Having voluntarily assumed its obligations, give yourself wholly to them. Let them have your heart and your life. No mechanical, perfunctory, or merely professional service will fulfil the requisitions before you. *Devote* yourself to the ministry. You know the ancient import of that word; it intimated a sacramental consecration. Accept it as describing your own condition. Let the cord which shall bind you as a sacrifice to the altar be the threefold argument which had such force with the great Apostle, as he looked first to the Master in whose name he should speak, saying, "The love of Christ constraineth me;" next, to those

whose everlasting good lay upon his soul, "My heart's desire and prayer is, that they may be saved;" then to the consequences in his own experience, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel."

To preach is one function of the ministry; in our day and in Protestant communities, or at least in our congregations, its prominent function. Your success therefore will depend very much on the views you entertain of preaching. A theory about preaching is like a theory of education, — a convenient way of substituting abstractions for practical issues. But to enter the pulpit without a careful consideration of the uses to which the pulpit should be put is the opposite extreme of error. The one great thing to be remembered is, that it is the preacher's business to make men religious, to expound and enforce religion, as at once the science of heaven, the philosophy of life, and the oracle of duty. Now, religion supposes the existence of faith. To implant faith in men's minds, to make them believers in such an experimental sense that they may be said to "live by faith," is then the true end of preaching. Therefore in the pulpit unfold the highest truths. Preach on eternal themes. Let your sermons treat of man's relations to God. Speak of judgment and of mercy, of repentance and of obedience. Your congregation will always include two classes of persons, those who have entered on a religious life, and those who are virtually living in unbelief. One of the perplexities to which the Christian minister is subject lies in the right apportionment of his instruction to these

two classes. Each of them must receive due attention. Change must be preached to the one, progress to the other. Do not forget the wants of one part of your hearers, in your desire to benefit another part. In observing this rule you will secure the variety which is so much needed.

Yet let me caution you against an affectation of novelty. Do not be afraid of familiar topics or common language. As the early preaching of the Gospel consisted mainly of a recital of the words and acts of Jesus, so good preaching ever since has been in the main a reiteration of what Christian mothers teach their children, — the simple truths of piety and morality. It is a mournful perversion of his function, when a preacher entertains people with an ingenious discussion or a pretty piece of rhetoric; and it is a vicious taste in the people, to go to the place of worship with a desire for any such display. If they wish to see what shall amaze or delight them, let them go to some necromancer's show or artist's performance; but, in the names of justice and sanctity, do not let them ask that God's holy truth be turned into an apparatus for the exhibition of intellectual gymnastics. Preach plainly, my brother. Tell men they are sinners. Call things by their right names. Point your instruction, so that it shall fasten itself upon your hearer's conscience. Neither try to be original, nor, on the other hand, file away every peculiarity of mind or manner, that you may resemble some model whom either you or the people admire. Be natural. Be yourself, and not the shadow and counterfeit of some one

else. The best imitation is not half so good as uncouth genuineness. Constantly seek improvement in your style and your delivery, but in the attempt to rise to a higher professional position do not sink into a copyist of some name of traditional celebrity or an echo of some favorite voice of the day.

Keep your sermons within their proper range and aim. Whether they take the form of discussion, criticism, or homily, let them be of such a character as shall make the hearers better. For Christ's sake, do not consider it the end of your office, to conduct certain forms of worship, or to keep up religious institutions. Christ did not die merely to found a Church that should bear his name, but to "purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" constituting indeed a Church, but one that should be "holy and without blemish." Holiness, about that central idea let your preaching revolve, as in an orbit to every part of which reaches the attraction that shall make your sermons faithful to one great purpose. If those felicities of style which might place you among the more distinguished or popular preachers of your time lie at your command, regard them as another talent for the proper use of which you must render an account. But let it be your single endeavor, to preach in such a manner as shall prepare both you and your hearers for that judgment which will have no respect of persons.

In the pulpit and in private, avoid bigotry and dogmatism; but do not hope to build up a Christian character

in yourself or in others without a solid foundation of doctrine. Have faith, — a distinct, harmonious, settled belief; and let your people know what you believe. Do not suppose that sentiment can take the place of conviction as the basis of a religious life, or that the graces of the soul can be ripened beneath the moonshine of an æsthetic culture instead of the rays of the sun of righteousness.

In your preaching, appeal to the Bible as your text-book in a higher sense than as furnishing you with mottoes for your discourses. Use it as the storehouse of Divine wisdom, the armory of spiritual truth. Should I presume on any point to speak in a tone of dictation, I should charge you to preach from the Bible, and on the Bible. Handle the great facts and revelations of the Scripture with a devout and grateful care. Preach of God, of Christ, and of man, as you find them exhibited in the Bible; of God as the Supreme Ruler and Heavenly Father, of Christ as the Divine Messenger and moral Saviour, of man as the actual sinner as well as the possible saint. Do not affect a phraseology, that leaves it uncertain what you mean, and creates a suspicion that you have no very clear idea of your own meaning. Be not fond of an eclecticism that prefers a theology of the Composite order, the worst style of spiritual architecture, to the grand and simple Doric of the Gospel.

Be a *Christian* preacher, and a Christian minister. This is a Christian pulpit which you occupy, and Christian friends welcome you to its privileges. If you do not mean

to take Christ as your master, we have come hither under a mistake. And if you should hereafter deem it your painful duty to assail the mediatorial work of our Lord, we shall not be so foolish as to obstruct your display of the gift that is in you, but we should much prefer that you would exercise that gift in some other place. Regarding him as an infallible teacher and the ultimate authority on religious questions, we cannot bestow our sympathy on any attempt to reduce him to a level with the sages or the saints who were environed with human imperfection.

If you would give unity or permanent emphasis to your preaching, ever keep in mind that the groundwork of a good life is faith in those Divine teachings which were sealed by the blood of the Redeemer. Strive to make men Christians; then you will make them exemplary in every walk of duty. Care not so much about the details as about the principle. Preach on peace, on temperance, on freedom; but rather as illustrations of the mind of Christ than as independent or co-equal topics. The only sure basis of social reform, the only hope of a better age, is in the honest reception of Christian truths. And who shall make it his business to gain for these truths a home in the heart, if not he who, alike by his own choice and by the selection of the people, is "set for the defence of the Gospel"? The Christian minister gives his best advocacy to any moral or philanthropic enterprise, when he insists on the vital doctrines of the New Testament. In these days, when literature is exerting an influence it never enjoyed before, and

the popular lecturer is gaining the ear of thousands, while he discourses on every subject within the range of human inquiry, the pulpit must hold its ground in public estimation, not by dazzling extravagance or multifarious propagandism, but by its sober, fervent, spiritual appeals to the innermost consciousness of the soul. I have no fear that preaching will fall into disrepute, if it will keep its proper place, and manifest an honorable self-respect; but if, renouncing its peculiar character, it attempt to wrest from other candidates for public favor their titles to regard by an imitation of their methods, it may expect to share the fate of royalty when it puts on the garb of labor and descends into the noisy street.

In the prayers which you bring to the altar, let the people present with you the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart. There is a theory about Prayer which, as I judge, robs it of all propriety, — converting request into meditation, and using the terms of address to God as mere forms of soliloquy. But there is a practical error in devotion, that seems to me not less objectionable. The attitude which it most becomes man to assume in his approach to Heaven is that of an unworthy suppliant; the words which should be among the first to escape from his lips are, " God be merciful to me, a sinner." Yet I have heard prayers by Christian ministers and in Christian assemblies, which as carefully avoided a recognition of human sinfulness, as if it were a subject which it did not comport with the Divine purity to introduce into seasons of devotion.

Can there be a more obvious or a more sad mistake? Never forget, my brother, that your people are sinners, as well as yourself. And ask God, in continual supplication, to forgive you all for his great mercy's sake.

You will discharge the functions of a pastor as well as a preacher. Be among your people as one who cares for their souls. Visit them freely, and establish frank and cordial relations between yourself and them. But let every visit have a connexion with the spiritual ends which your ministry is intended to promote. Avoid frivolous conversation, and remember that your intercourse with those whose highest good you should always desire must aim at a better result than good neighborhood or pleasant social feeling. Maintain the right course between too much and too little visiting. Retain your habit of spending many hours of every day in your study. Read much, read solid books, read theological works, and works that will build up the true life in your own soul. Think much, that you may digest what you have read, and may prepare it for reproduction, so far as shall be best, in your sermons. Write those sermons carefully, with previous meditation and contemporaneous fervor. Sometimes you must write poor sermons, for every one who is mortal must; but on such unhappy occasions let the poverty of the discourse arise from causes which you cannot control, and not from indolence or procrastination. Let your pastoral intercourse supply the defects of the pulpit. Confer in private with those who listen to you in public, and do not let any one of those

who are accustomed to look up to you with respect, have occasion to repeat the Apostle's poignant censure, "Although he seemed to be somewhat, in conference he added nothing to me."

I do not need to remind you that your usefulness will depend very much on your personal character. The estimation in which a minister is held in the community to which he belongs, increases or impairs the effect of his public services. Let no one be able to "speak evil" of you, my friend, unless it be "falsely;" and then, if notwithstanding your integrity of life and purity of purpose you are "evil spoken of," you will have the beatitudes of the Saviour for your support. In your general intercourse with your fellow-men, conduct yourself in such a manner as to secure their respect as well as their confidence. Do not discard common sense, because you are supposed to act on principles drawn from another world. Be not rash nor severe. Perhaps there is no one who has more need than a minister to keep in view the pregnant remark of the Apostle, that "the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things." At least, his experience often enables him to exclaim, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!" In the exercise of your rights as a citizen, you will express your opinion and act your part as freely as any other member of society; but you will not think it requisite for you to be foremost in every social movement. It is not necessary that the clergy should take the lead everywhere. On questions affecting the moral condition, whether

of your neighbors or of your fellow-beings in some other part of the country or section of the globe, you are bound to feel and manifest a warm interest; but that warmth will not necessarily be shown in violent speech or precipitate action. The same authority that has pronounced it "good to be zealously affected always in a good thing," has instructed us to let our "moderation be known unto all men;" while a more imperative voice has taught us to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." In your private life, set ever before you the great Pattern of righteousness; following him, you cannot err. Let men "take notice of you, that you have been with Jesus." Let your character reflect his influence, and a holier radiance shall invest your person than that which rested on the face of Israel's leader, when he came from the mount of inspiration. Be not unwilling that your clerical office should be imputed to you in other places than the pulpit. You are not less a man because you are a minister; but, on the other hand, you need not be less a minister because you are a man. Be true at once to yourself and to your office. Let your preaching and your living, your professional efforts and your personal habits, concur in strengthening your influence over your people, and in preparing both you and them for the retributions of eternity.

Let me add a word on the wider relations which you will hold. Your change of residence will seem to you to induce in no respect a greater novelty of position, than in your removal from an isolated ministry to the midst of a

large sisterhood of churches and a numerous body of professional friends. You have in past years known the satisfaction of ministering to an intelligent congregation and an attached people; you will find the same here. But duty has now called you from a quiet rural home to a populous city, and from clerical seclusion to a community in which many congregations will be glad to hear your voice in occasional exchange for the more familiar words of their own pastors. We trust that you come among us disposed to reciprocate the cordiality with which you are welcomed. We shall be disappointed and shall hold ourselves justified in complaint, if you withdraw yourself from our fraternal sympathies. As we interpret the duties of the position which you now occupy, you must not stand aloof from the general activity or the Christian movements of this metropolis. You must work in other circles as well as within the sphere of pastoral faithfulness. We shall look to you for coöperation in advancing the social improvement and the religious influence of this community. Do not fall into that individualism of life, which has so close a resemblance to timid policy or selfish indolence, that one is continually tempted to call it by the wrong name. Next after a more fervid internal force, there is nothing which our churches so much want as a more cordial and efficient concurrence in promoting the interests of religion. Nothing would give our clergy more practical value as guides or aids of social progress, than a closer harmony among themselves.

You have come to a city noted from its settlement for the regard bestowed on the ministers of the Gospel. I doubt if there be either wisdom or justice in the complaint so common, of a declining respect for the clergy. They may not now enjoy the factitious distinction or the merely official influence which they once possessed; and who of us is sorry for the loss? But the good minister in our day has at least his fair proportion of respect and esteem. Nothing can be more puerile, nothing less compatible with dignity of character or dignity of office, than pettish lamentation over the decline of clerical influence. Why should not a minister be judged on the same principles as his fellow-men? and if he "study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," he should not fear that he will not be held in due estimation. The ways in which men express their regard change with the years. You will not be invited to as many dinners as your predecessors, and for that you should be thankful. But you will find a just and generous people, who will reward your efforts on their behalf with a manly confidence and a cordial affection.

You succeed to a line of eminent ministers, the fragrance of whose virtues gives an imperishable sweetness to the history of this Church. You stand in the place of the first pastor of Boston. The last servant at this altar will sit at your feet, a voluntary and a happy listener, — long to be spared, we hope, to you and us. Seldom does one enter upon a new work amidst such circumstances and such

associations. It falls to another to remind you of the encouragement they afford. I will but hint at the magnitude of the task they create, that I may, in one final word, exhort, nay, in the name of all that is honorable or worthy, *charge* you to be faithful to the place and the service; faithful before men, faithful before your own soul, faithful before God, the Searcher of hearts and righteous Rewarder of deeds.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

Hands that have been joined so often as yours and mine, my brother, must meet very cheerfully, at your renewed consecration to the ministry of Christ. First, you remember, under the elms at Cambridge, among those half-impatient studies which we both feel now were broken off too soon, — seeing how much a young man needs to learn whose whole after-life is to be used in telling what he knows; again, many times at Northampton, while I rested and you labored, — labored how faithfully, I might safely summon all my neighbors and kindred to tell, in that valley of beauty where God's grace gave me a home, and permitted you to create one in so many grateful, affectionate hearts; once, too, by a grave opened for the honored dust of a spirit that was willing to call you also a son out of the love and reverence she bore to your calling; and now, once more, not less solemnly, in this pulpit, where you are henceforth to utter the wisest wisdom earned by all your studies, to expend the riper toil of a faith that works

by love, to preach the Gospel that pours consolation on every Christian grave, and peace into all the world's suffering life.

You pass to this parish from another. Just motives need not be treated timidly. I have reasons for not undervaluing the regrets of your former hearers and companions. But they will be brave and liberal. If the disinterested disciple of philosophy, dismissing his friend and fellow-priest to another continent, could say to him, "Go, you belong to no country, but to science," an equally magnanimous farewell can be afforded, I think, to any sincere minister of religion obeying the bidding of his clearest judgment. You belong to the church, and no church to you. You are a serving member in the universal body of Christ; and no separate organization, there or here, can make property of you. If you had skipped from one Christian vineyard to another in a faithless or fickle or self-seeking temper, goaded by a profane ambition, it is no ceremony of an installation that can put you right with God, and that must be a base brother's hand that would offer you fellowship.

The fellowship these churches pledge you, my friend, you know as well as I, is meant to be a fellowship of service. The tasks of your office, in any right interpreting of it, are its privileges. I welcome you to it at a time and place where the worst hardships of the ministry are the debilitating influences of a formal respect, and its foremost dangers are its comforts; where a lowly communion with

God, and a quiet waiting on the beckonings of his Spirit, are beset by terrible adversaries, in a bewildering, cheap confusion, and an everlasting supplicating for the help of man; where a silent confession of the royalty of simple truth is sadly broken by the loud grating of much mortal machinery; where the Presence of the Ineffable Mystery to our prayers is perpetually disturbed by poor contrivances of will-worship; where an alert civility to the functionary of piety must often be the dismal and discouraging substitute for sympathy with his deeper aims, and kindness to his person is apt to cheat his soul of the very thirst for an inward answer to his message. I *welcome* you to such exposures, because I judge you balanced enough and believing enough to conquer them, and because Christendom wants fresh proofs that they can be conquered; because discipline is God's price for our freedom, and self-denial is the only purchase of strength and peace, as climbing is the price of the prospect. Let us not speak much, like special pleaders, of the trials of our vocation; remembering that to the eye of the world they are all handsomely dressed in luxuries, while every spiritual insight knows that our only actual peril must come by the way of a yielding conscience.

I welcome you, therefore, to the honor of casting in among these fretting currents of a city's business the noble force of a manly religion and worshipping affections. I welcome you to the joy of contributing whatever energy resides in a patient and devout mind towards breaking the bonds of sottish self-indulgence, of servile fashions, of a

selfish, impudent social economy; towards the rooting out of a bitter pride; towards sinking, through the barren sands of habit, refreshing wells of spiritual conviction; towards putting to shame, by the calm, humbling rebukes of him who spoke with authority, heated passions and intellectual vanity; towards forestalling the plots of practical pagans, who have forgotten their Christian baptism; towards baffling, if you can, the nimble servitors of unprincipled policy, so corrupt, so stooping, so hateful; towards spreading among affectionate and orderly families, wakened by the frank light of day, a pure and undefiled Christianity, and so helping to organize on earth a society whose highest life is its Christian life, and which reflects the brightest resemblance to the kingdom of heaven, reviving here in such measures as the Spirit suffers, the sanctities of Bethany and Bethlehem, of Tabor and Gethsemane.

I greet you to the positive preaching, among us, of the New Testament doctrine, on its New Testament sanctions, — the doctrine that meets the soul under its personal exigency, — that pleads, after the Baptist and Jesus, for repentance and newness of heart, — that honors the Messiah as a mediator reconciling the life of man with the life of God, and bringing the divine into redeeming contact with the human. I greet you to the praying of devout prayers, and to preaching religion religiously.

I greet you to a clear, emphatic witness-bearing against the treachery that would stamp idolatrous theories and superstitions of false philosophy with the old signet of the

Cross; to vigorous protests against all clerical, as well as commercial duplicity. I greet you to the comprehensive affirmation of the beauty of holiness, the Beatitudes, the ever-present Lord, the eternal friendship of the Spirit; and thus to confirming the grand hope of a serener future, which shall melt sects into one Catholic brotherhood, as humane as evangelical, and widen all our narrow creeds into a generous unity.

Another right hand from the churches will be stretched out to you, close to your side, not to-day only, but every day, till all its benignant offices fail; the one that has turned the leaves of this Bible, broken sacramental bread and sprinkled baptismal waters at this altar, and guided this flock, more than thirty years. Be it long before it droops, or forgets the guileless cunning of its pen! Except the teacher you succeed disowns hereafter the law that has ruled so kindly over his manners among many brethren, no averted look on his face will ever perplex or discomfort you.

Another yet! invisible, but more real than his or mine, — the hand of the Master. How else shall I gather all my hearty wishes for you into one, than by praying that you may ever feel the strong and tender pressure of that; that it may lay upon you an unfailing gift; that it may avert from your breast all sorrows that are not better blessings than joys; that it may crown you with the triumphant tokens of a confiding and courageous ministry?

ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY,

BY REV. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

The churches, at your invitation, have met the pastor of your choice at the threshold of his ministry, and by prayer and charge and sweet salutation have consecrated and welcomed him to his new office. So far as concerns himself, the duties of this occasion have been fulfilled, and the promptings of our sympathy gratified.

And now, not as a mere ceremony, nor yet to conform to an ancient and appropriate usage, the current of our attention and address is turned to you. For, brethren, we consider that all these acts of consecration are for your sakes; that the true interest of this occasion centres not in the person of the minister, but in the prospects of the church; that he is for you and not you for him, his office for your comfort, his honor in your edification.

Moreover, brethren, the antiquity of your church, the richness of its history, and the honorable position it has hitherto held, awaken in your behalf a more than common interest, and assure you of the sincerity of our congratulations.

But the same considerations, permit me to say, appear to us to lay upon you as a Christian society peculiar obligations. The oldest of the Boston churches, with all its venerable associations, is a sacred trust. You stand in the places of no mean men. The church which Winthrop and Dudley and Wilson and Cotton founded is a weighty and honorable charge. Your fathers felt it to be so in their day. They kept it faithfully while it was in their hands. With earnest admonitions they have transmitted it to you. It is resting upon your consciences, your energies, and your hearts.

And what does this trust involve? Not merely a corporate continuance, — not the provision of things decent in the sight of men for the support of religious worship, — not a respectable supply and maintenance of the pulpit, — not the care of rendering commodious and amiable the tabernacles of our God, — not these duties merely, with respect to which you have always manifested a laudable interest and are not likely to be remiss, — not these duties merely, important as they are, which pertain rather to the externals of religion, — but it involves also those higher obligations which affect the spiritual life of the church; which look to its compactness, animation, and growth as a Christian body, through the supply of every joint, and the effectual working of every member. It involves an obedient holding to the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. It involves those

very same obligations by which the founders of this church were principally and profoundly moved, when, to use their own words, they united themselves "into one congregation or church, under the Lord Jesus Christ, their head, and solemnly and religiously, as in his most holy presence, did promise and bind themselves to walk in all their ways, according to the rule of the Gospel, and in all sincere conformity to his holy ordinances, *and in mutual love.*"

Perhaps the apostolic language we borrow, and the terms of this ancient covenant, may fall upon some modern ears with a strange and antiquated sound. Perhaps the high ideas they express of the sacredness of a Christian church and the responsibilities of its members may be regarded by some in our day as among the curious superstitions of a less enlightened age. I trust that with no such feeling the members of this congregation recur to the early covenant of their fathers. I trust that there is no man here who would lower the original pattern of a Christian church, because it seems impracticable to copy it in our day. If the apostolic rule be deemed too strict for modern application, we will not refuse to honor those who sincerely strove for its perfect obedience. The faith we cannot equal we will not undervalue. The piety which is above our measure we will not depreciate. Rather, with deep respect and

> "moistened eye,
> We read of faith and purest piety
> In statesman, priest, and humble citizen.
> Oh, could we copy their great virtues, then
> What joy to live, what happiness to die!

Methinks their clustering names shine still and bright,
Like stars revolving in a lucid ring
Around meek Wilson's heavenly memory." *

But, my friends, however the modes and notions of men may vary, the true idea of a Christian church, and the relations and duties of its constituents, remain the same in all stages of civilization and in all ages of the world.

Association under Christ for the worship of God, the learning and defence of the truth, the edification of itself in love, the propagation of the Gospel, and works of charity, — these are the essential elements of a Christian church; and they never change. Not one of them can be left out without loss and injury. And where they all co-exist, the wisdom of man and the advance of knowledge can add nothing that shall increase the efficiency and glory of this institution, or better adapt it to the necessities of any future age.

But all these constitutional principles of a Christian church, if they were not distinctly laid down in the New Testament, — all these branches of its duty, if they might not by just reasoning be deduced from the very nature of such an association, — all these would be the natural and actual development of the Christian spirit and life in a body of true believers.

Where there is *life*, there is growth, there is warmth,

* The slight alterations I have ventured to make in these beautiful lines of Wordsworth, to adapt them to the first members of this church, are not, I hope, inexcusable.

there is activity, there is expansion. Where there is life in a Christian vine, there is close adherence, there is circulation, there is reciprocal vivification, there is an ever-widening spread of attractive beauty and of welcome shade, there is an ever-increasing fruitfulness for the glory of God and for the comfort of men.

If there be this true life in any church, it will abide, it will flourish, it will revive again after a temporary check; it cannot fade, it will not die. An unfavorable location can affect it but little; for it is worth transplanting, and if necessary it will be transplanted, and will take quick root in a new soil. Old age cannot kill it; for it is ever springing with new vitality, and length of time has but deepened and strengthened its roots. But if this life be not in a church, though it may still have a name to live, it is as good as dead. External props may hold it up for a while; the worthy pride of old associations may carry it on a little further; considerations of economy or convenience or expediency may maintain its existence for a few more years; but that very existence will be only a *protracted process of dissolution.*

The older churches of our city are without doubt affected disadvantageously now, and will be for a time, by local and external causes. But this fact, instead of discouraging their efforts and deadening their zeal, should rather animate them to redoubled diligence; and it will do so, if they have any of the spirit of their ancestors remaining, or the spirit of their Master. They cannot fail but by their own

default. They will never die, but by infirmity at the core. They will yet survive and spring and flourish, if there be any life in them, — if they have any *right* to live.

But what need is there, my friends, that we should commend to you this church, which has come down to your charge, as worth preserving and re-animating, as worthy of your best individual and united efforts to sustain and strengthen and rebuild? What need we point your thoughts to the value it has conferred upon our beloved city; to the important influence it has hitherto exerted upon its moral and religious improvement and welfare, or to the power it may still possess of usefulness and benefaction? What need that we should remind you, that as it was the first, so it has been one of the brightest, of its greater lights; mother of many saints, — mother, I might almost say, of many churches; and that on the long roll of its members are inscribed the names of many of New England's noblest and worthiest sons, — names of the purest and most enduring fame? What inducements could we suggest, what motives could we urge upon you, that do not already present themselves to every thoughtful hearer, and press with solemn urgency upon every Christian heart?

Who that has ever been an efficient member of this venerable church, who that has been instrumental in any way to its prosperity or its continuance, who that has given to it of his time or his wealth or his energies or his prayers, has not now, and will not have for ever, cause to be grate-

ful to Almighty God that he has granted him the disposition and the opportunity thereby to contribute his portion to its own edification, and to the blessings it has confered upon mankind?

And now, my friends, while you are still enjoying the friendly countenance and prudent counsels of him who has been for many years a faithful teacher and a tried friend, you have called another, strong and experienced, to animate and aid you in your associated work. He will devote to this church his best energies. But he cannot build it up alone. You that are wise must give him the aid of your counsel; you that are influential must sustain his influence; you that are kind must cheer him with your smile; you that are devout must help him with your prayers. Each must supply his part to the sacred enterprise, in whose success or failure all are involved, and for whose issue all will be held accountable. We would not presume to charge; but, brethren, we are bound to advise you, — each one of you who is a partaker of the privileges of this church, and a sharer of its sacred duties, — to resolve, on this day, as in the presence of the great Head of the Church, that this hallowed association shall *feel* his membership of it, shall be enlivened by his personal interest, strengthened by his faithful exertions, harmonized by his considerate kindness, enriched by his charities, adorned by the purity of his life; that he will be a living partner in it; that he will not interpose between its members a *cold* heart, to check the circulation of its Christian life, nor

bring into the company of its workmen an *idle* hand, to make the burden heavier upon those who are willing to labor in the Lord; but introduce, rather, into this fraternity of disciples a heart whose warm pulses shall beat responsive to every call of brotherly kindness or duty, and a hand ever ready alike for the clasp of Christian fellowship or the work of Christian edification and charity.

Finally, Christian brethren, how can I more appropriately close these brief remarks, than by repeating to you the beautiful and impressive benediction of one of the purest in the long line of your venerated Prophets: —

"Long after we, my brethren, shall have mingled our dust with the ashes of our fathers, may this vineyard of the Lord be fair and flourishing. May the branches be beautiful; and out of her roots may there come forth strong rods, that shall defend the truth of Jesus, and uphold the rights and liberties of the Church universal. Peace be within her walls; and may Faith and Hope and Charity be her continual guests! As in times past, so in times to come, may the Highest himself overshadow and establish her."

Order of Services

AT THE

INSTALLATION OF REV. RUFUS ELLIS,

AS

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN BOSTON,

MAY 4, 1853.

Voluntary.

TE DEUM LAUDAMUS.

(Romberg.)

INTRODUCTORY PRAYER.

REV. O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

READING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

REV. J. I. T. COOLIDGE.

HYMN OF INSTALLATION.

(Ravenscroft, ob. 1630.)

ETERNAL LORD! to thee the Church,
Where now we praise and pray,
Though old to our historic search,
Is but of yesterday.

Of yesterday is all our race
To thine all-present sight;
Before thy truth both time and place
Dissolve in higher light.

Yet here, O heavenly Father! grant
Thy special presence down;
Our fathers' God, the children's want
With chosen bounties crown.

Oh! deign to write thy love and fear
Upon these humble walls;
And speak when sinful man shall hear,
And listen when he calls.

Train up this flock, a Church indeed,
Unspotted, unenticed,
On thy dear Word of Life to feed,
And follow after Christ.

With light and strength, O Fount Divine!
Fill high thy servant's heart,
Who seeks anew the anointing sign, —
The grace thou shalt impart.

N. L. F.

SERMON.

REV. GEORGE E. ELLIS.

PRAYER OF INSTALLATION.

REV. N. L. FROTHINGHAM.

PSALM.

(Ellenwood. H. K. O.)

"THE Lord gave the word," — 'twas the word of his truth,
And the word of salvation for all men to be:
Then forth went its preachers, the aged, the youth,
And "great was the company."

"The Lord gave the word," — it was not as of old,
When the ark of his strength to the temple was brought,
With the clanging of steel, and the gleaming of gold,
And spoils of a battle fought.

But the Gospel of faith in the spirit of love
Is the true "King of Glory" the Church has enshrined;
And "the chariots of God" are the "thousands" that move
As "angels" to bless mankind.

O Lord! give this word its triumphant success;
Be its mercy and peace on thy worshippers here;
And clothe all thy saints with its righteousness,
With its earnest joy and fear.

N. L. F.

CHARGE.

REV. E. S. GANNETT.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP.

REV. F. D. HUNTINGTON.

ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY.

REV. CHANDLER ROBBINS.

ANTHEM.

CONCLUDING PRAYER.

REV. ALEXANDER YOUNG.

BENEDICTION.

BY THE PASTOR.